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TAGS: [KCFE](#) [NATO](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [GG](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: READOUT OF FRIED-ANTONOV
DISCUSSION ON CFE

Classified By: EUR A/S DAN FRIED FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (SBU) This is an action request. NATO capitals, Embassy Tbilisi, and Embassy Chisinau are requested to deliver the points in para 2 to the appropriate host government officials on the results of the December 17 CFE Treaty consultations between the U.S. and Russia. For full readout of the consultations, please see septel.

¶2. (S/REL NATO, MD, GG) Points for delivery:

- Assistant Secretary Fried met Russian MFA International Security and Disarmament Director Antonov for a five-hour discussion to review the status of the CFE Parallel Actions Package. Both sides were represented by full teams from foreign and defense ministries. The meeting did not result in any breakthroughs; Russia reiterated maximalist positions on a number of key issues. However, the meeting resulted in one of the most interesting and concrete discussions of specific ideas since consultations began in fall 2007.

- The meeting touched on all the major elements of the parallel actions package, but focused on three main issues: the flank, Georgia, and Russia's suspension.

- Antonov's comments on the parallel actions package as a whole echoed public comments by Foreign Minister Lavrov, arguing that the current iteration of the paper exchanged "Russian actions for NATO promises." The U.S. team explained this was not the case.

- Implementation: A/S Fried underscored that NATO had been very forthcoming in its proposals on a way ahead; Russia should not expect that NATO Allies would be ready to offer concessions in order to convince Russia to return to meeting Treaty obligations that it should have been fulfilling all along. We were ready to work cooperatively, but Russia needed to do its part. Antonov cited information exchange and verification as areas where Russia might be willing to resume implementation if the rest of the package met its (maximum) desiderata, but underscored that any steps involving the flank would be a problem for Russia.

- Georgia: Fried used this meeting to present new ideas - which the U.S. had worked out with Georgian authorities - for updating the Georgia portion of the Package. The Russian side appeared surprised that the U.S. and Georgia had been able to identify ideas for a way forward on this difficult aspect. The approach advanced by the U.S. involve withdrawal of Russian CFE Treaty Limited Equipment from Georgian territory, transparency and observation at Gudauta and other relevant facilities, and information and verification, based on Adapted CFE modalities, regarding Russian forces in the South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions of Georgia, as well as in the North Caucasus Military District. Georgia would offer

comparable transparency on its forces. The Russian team - noting they were not agreeing to the proposal - asked detailed questions about the specifics, and undertook to report the ideas to Moscow immediately for consideration. It was clear that that the Russian side considered these ideas very ambitious.

- Although Antonov claimed that steps on Georgia were not an essential element of a solution on CFE, particularly in the wake of Russian military action, he did not reject the idea that Georgia and Moldova belong in the CFE package, as he had on previous occasions. In fact, he suggested that the U.S. and Russia were probably closest to agreement on Moldova.

- Flank: There was extensive discussion on the flank. Antonov pushed for a reaction to the Baluyevskiy flank proposal, according to which the flank regime would encompass all Russian territory covered by the Treaty, under Russia's overall limit for Russian territory in the area of application. The flank restrictions would remain for other participants in the Treaty. Antonov insisted there could be no agreement on the Parallel Actions Package if Russia's concerns on the flank were not addressed. He ascribed this position to President Putin.

- Discussion was extensive, encompassing the full history of the origins of the flank limits. Fried responded sharply: the Baluyevskiy proposal amounted to an arrangement where flank limits applied to NATO but not to Russia. This was obviously one-sided and not negotiable. Responding to Antonov's argument that the flank limits are no longer needed, Fried said that Russia's attack on Georgia, combined with its suspension of CFE, had fueled reasonable concerns about Russia's forces and intentions, and led many Allies to consider legal limits more important now than previously. Moreover, it has hard to imagine how NATO Allies could ratify a Treaty if core provisions were being renegotiated.

- (FOR ANKARA AND OSLO ONLY/ONLY) The Russian team indicated that the Baluyevskiy proposal did not need to be the end of the story, and hinted that if the legal limits were eliminated, Russia might agree to political commitments restricting force levels, on the model of commitments undertaken in the CFE Final Act with regard to Pskov and Kaliningrad.

- Given the number and complexity of the issues, Fried and Antonov agreed that it would be desirable for the sides to meet again early in the new year, if possible. Both Fried and Antonov were open to expanding participation to include other concerned States Parties on an issue by issue basis. Antonov expressed concern that a meeting at 30 (or 30-plus), on the model of seminars in 2007, would not be conducive to resolving issues.

- A/S Fried and Antonov agreed to follow up on planning in January.

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